

## **In the footsteps of Nikola Tesla's secret laboratory in Quebec (English Translation)**

A mysterious European scientist came to carry out experiments in the depths of the woods.

A vast virgin forest connecting Portneuf, Haute-Mauricie and Lac Saint-Jean, once popular with wealthy American hunters.

A man visited by extraterrestrials in the suburbs of Quebec.

In search of the enigmatic inventor Nikola Tesla's "secret laboratory" in Quebec, where the line between myth and reality is blurred.

I had been circling for over an hour on the bumpy dirt roads leading right and left around Lake Mackay-Smith. Several times I had hit a dead end, forcing myself to gently turn the car around. One pedal too many and I would find myself stuck in a ditch, in the middle of nowhere, with no cellular network to call for help.

I had entered the Rivière-Blanche Controlled Zone (Zec) in the hope of clarifying an old urban legend of Portneuf and Haute-Mauricie.

Whether or not the famous inventor Nikola Tesla had conducted in secret, deep in the Quebec forest, some of the last experiments of his life?

I had already spent far too much time on the issue and had been waiting for a few months for someone named Aurèle Labbé, whose cabin on the shores of Lake Mackay-Smith was central to my investigation. At least I hoped so.

Too happy to learn that he would finally be passing through said chalet at the end of August, I had not taken the time to ask him for precise instructions to get there and now I had reached the limits of the GPS map I relied on to navigate.

In this immense territory, Huron-Wendat trappers and hunters had guided, on foot, through lakes and forests, wealthy American hunters for most of the 20th century. I wonder what they would have thought when they learned that 100 years later, a poor journalist with a big Japanese car and all the maps of the world at his fingertips would still manage to lose his way.

Lost in thought, it took me a few seconds to realize that the glow of light in front of me in the distance was actually the sun reflecting off the water of Lake Mackay-Smith.

I was finally at my destination, I told myself, relieved, switching off the engine a few dozen yards away. Except that the chalet in front of me looked nothing like the archive photos I had taken care to look again the day before.



The chalet of the Triton club nowadays.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

"There are two cabins around Lake Mackay-Smith," I was warned at the entrance to the zec. I was obviously on the wrong side. It looked deserted, and as I walked along the wharf, I could see in the distance, on a point of land jutting out to the other end of the lake, a Canadian flag flying above a few imposing wooden buildings. round. A seaplane was moored there.

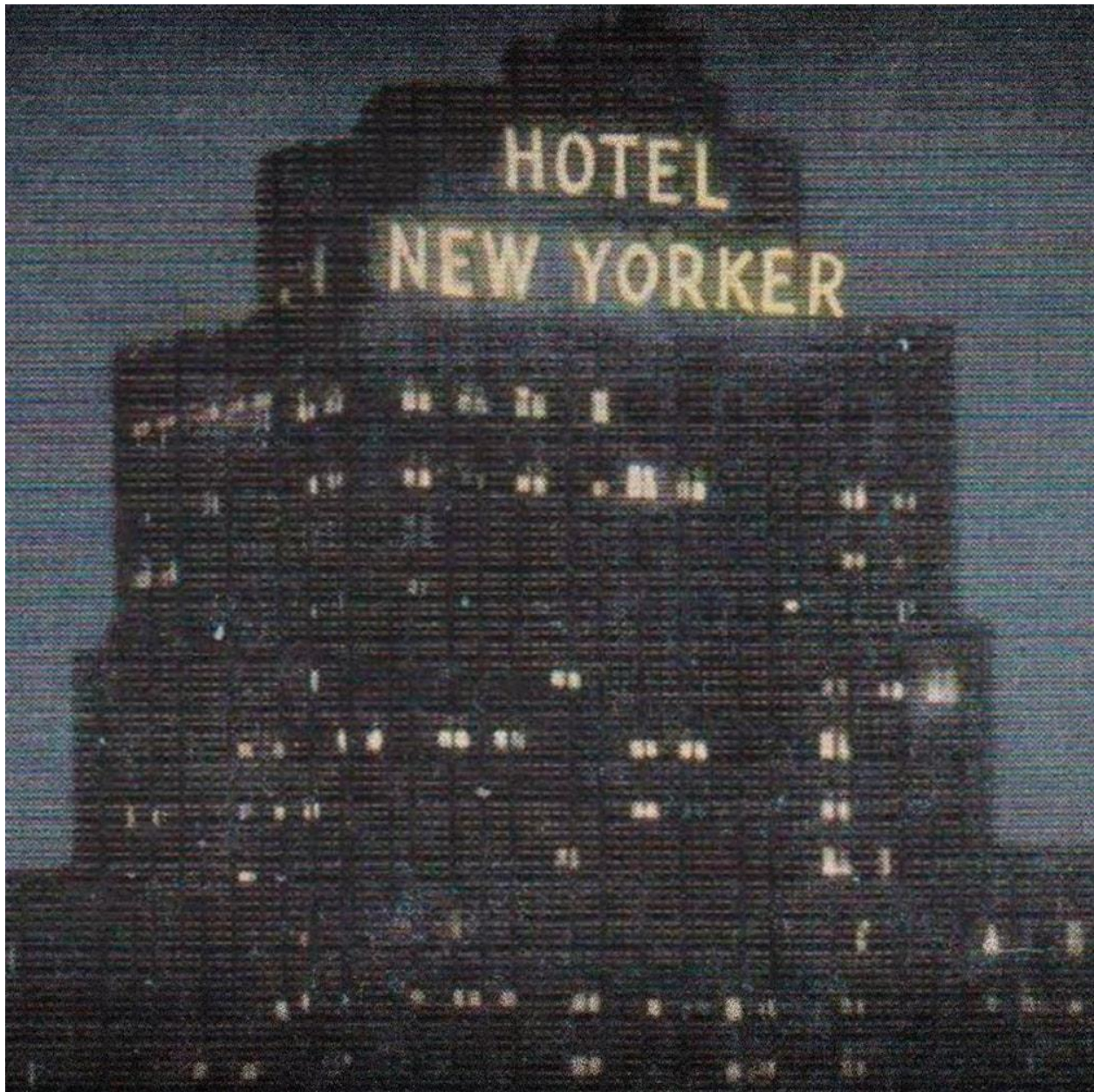
Bingo.

It could only be my destination, the Sanford Estate.

Turning back to get there by car was no longer an option, however. I just risked getting lost again. To my left, a forest path led into the forest, seeming to follow the contours of the lake. It was about two kilometers, I estimated. At a run, I would be there in about 15 minutes.

\* Below: Image of the New Yorker Hotel in 1943 | [New Yorker Hotel](#)





### **Tesla is dead, long live Tesla!**

The enormous New Yorker Hotel sign had been twinkling in the darkness of Manhattan for several hours already, on the evening of January 7, 1943, when in a corridor of the establishment, Alice Monaghan stopped in front of room 3327, deciding to 'enter despite the sign asking not to disturb that has been on the door for two days.

The discovery that the maid would make, that of an inert body, would quickly go around the world. At 86, Hotel New Yorker's most illustrious resident, inventor Nikola Tesla, quietly returned the soul in the room he had lived in for 9 years.

In the days that followed, praise for the eminent scientist would flow from everywhere.

"If ever an inventor lived up to a Jules Vernes novel, it was Nikola Tesla. [...] If the word "genius", which has often been abused, were to apply to a man, it would be him ", we read in the New York Times two days later.

This gifted young man who, as a teenager, chose to serve science rather than religion, as his father, a Serbian Orthodox priest, wanted. This young man whose arrival in New York in his late twenties in 1884 would revolutionize the world.

This obsessive-compulsive scientist who dared to challenge the great Thomas Edison, inventor of the electric light bulb, at the end of the 19th century, in what would become the "war of the currents". And it was Tesla who finally proved to the world, with a hydroelectric dam built at Niagara Falls, that it was "his" current, the alternating current, that was going to electrify the planet.

This great lonely mind struggling with visions, whose inventions in its laboratories in Colorado Spring, Long Island and New York had earned it several hundred patents, laying the foundations for revolutionary technologies, such as radio.



The announcement of Nikola Tesla's death in the New York Times newspaper.

PHOTO: THE NEW YORK TIMES

Within days of her death, 2,000 people gathered at Saint John the Divine Cathedral in New York City to attend the funeral and say their farewells.

Yet it was alone in a hotel room that Nikola Tesla returned. For the past several decades, the inventor had moved from one New York hotel to another, struggling to pay his bills, living alone and adopting pigeons that perched on his windowsill.

Since 1932, his public appearances had generally been limited to the invitation he extended to representatives of the press once a year, on his birthday, to take stock of his most recent scientific projects, increasingly wacky.

There was this great project of transmitting electricity over land, wirelessly, across the planet, which never came to fruition. There was the "Teleforce," a silent death beam capable of wiping 1,000,000 soldiers and 10,000 planes off the map in an instant, according to the inventor. Technology that would make any nation impenetrable and allow total peace on earth, Tesla said without being taken very seriously.

The same goes for its alleged cosmic ray engine and its camera capable of capturing the ideas of the human brain in images.

At the time of his death, the question had been floating around for a long time. Had the eminent scientist gone mad scientist?

\* Below: Club Triton train station | Courtesy Sylvain Gingras





### **Club Triton, hunting ground for Quebec millionaires**

"You really aren't the first to research this. Already in the 80s, when I was preparing my first book on Club Triton, there was a gentleman from Montreal whose name I have forgotten who was interested in Tesla ", the author warned me from the start. amateur historian Sylvain Gingras.

The Saint-Raymond resident in Portneuf is one of the first people I contacted when I began to dig up the legend of Nikola Tesla's secret laboratory in Quebec.

Sylvain Gingras has always been interested in this territory bordering the Laurentides wildlife reserve, at the ends of Portneuf and Haute-Mauricie. Or rather he was interested in the Triton Fish and Game Club, the Club Triton for the intimate ones, a prestigious hunting club which had control over a good part of these forests during the 20th century.



The Triton club is located between Quebec and Lac Saint-Jean.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA

Adélarde Lirette, the father of one of his childhood friends in Saint-Raymond, had been one of the last guardians of the place. Sylvain Gingras had been to Club Triton many times before it closed in 1981, in addition to working at the Seigneurie du Triton, an outfitter that began in the heart of the place in the 1980s.

It was the construction of the railroad between Quebec and Lac Saint-Jean, at the end of the 19th century, which had made accessible to the people of the city this vast region of luxuriant woods and lakes that had been roaming for many moons. Huron-Wendat nation. Wealthy Americans quickly took it over. The owners and their prestigious guests came to hunt and fish in the spring and fall, leaving their camps in the care of trapper families like the Sioui, Gros-Louis and Lirette for the rest of the year.

In 1989, after years of searching for photos, registers and testimonies, Sylvain Gingras co-authored the book *Le Club Triton*, on the history of the place.



Sylvain Gingras has always been interested in this territory bordering the Laurentides Wildlife Reserve, at the ends of Portneuf and Haute-Mauricie.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

In the book, republished in 2016, the resident of Saint-Raymond mentioned that Nikola Tesla had gone to Club Triton to conduct outdoor experiments.



After starting my research on the urban legend of the inventor's secret laboratory in Portneuf, I saw in this statement the most credible reference to any passage in the region.

The most credible, I say, because history also had well-detailed roots elsewhere: in the Quebec ufology community.

\* Below: The Sanford Estate



## **From Venus to Lac-Édouard**

On somewhat obscure websites, through articles devoted to the passage of extraterrestrials on Earth, I quickly realized that the name of Nikola Tesla was frequently associated with that of an English speaker from Lac-Beauport, a man named Arthur Matthews, who died in 1986.

First in a book written by an American, Margaret Storm, published in 1959, then in a biography, *The Wall of Light*, published in 1971, Arthur Matthews claimed to have been a close friend of Nikola Tesla most of his life.

Matthews says his father was working for Lord Kelvin, a prominent British physicist and electrical engineer, when Tesla visited him in 1892. Matthews and Tesla's father befriended and continued to see each other while the Matthews family immigrated to Quebec at the very beginning of the 20th century.

During Nikola Tesla's occasional stays at the family home in Quebec, Arthur Matthews said he had become close to Tesla and, after the death of his father, in 1915, being himself an electrical engineer, he would have started to carry out experiments with the latter. . First on the beaches of Tadoussac and Rivière-Portneuf, on the North Shore, then at the "private camp" of a mutual friend, Major Henry Sanford, near the municipality of Lac-Édouard.

The scientist would have even entrusted to Matthews, before his death, the mission of developing several of his unfinished inventions.

A somewhat presumptuous story, but a story which, until then, could still hold water.

Except that through these testimonies, Arthur Matthews also claimed that Nikola Tesla was an extraterrestrial who was deposited on Earth by inhabitants of Venus. In his book, a French version of which I had obtained from GARPAN, a Quebec ufology group, Matthews delivered a rambling tale, riddled with biblical references. He explained that he himself had been contacted by the Venusians because of his links with the scientist, and that he had more than once been embarked in a flying saucer that landed in his yard, in Lac-Beauport, to then undertake journeys. in the space.





arthur matthews in the 60s

PHOTO: COURTESY LAWRENCE MATTHEWS

I quickly decided to ditch the aliens and concluded that Tesla's move to Club Triton, as described by Sylvain Gingras, was my best lead. But to my own surprise, not only was the name Arthur Matthews familiar to the historian, he gave it some credibility.

It was because Major Henry Sanford's famous private camp, which Matthews was referring to, did exist. It was an area on the shores of Lake Mackay-Smith, south of Club Triton, not far from the municipality of Lac-Édouard, Sylvain Gingras explained to me.

That's not all. In an old audio recording available on the Internet, a man posing as Arthur Matthews described with remarkable accuracy the journey he and Nikola Tesla had made to the Sanford Estate in the spring of 1932.

Departing from the station in Quebec in the private car of New Yorker Henry Sanford, the small group was disembarked along the railroad at "Sanford station," said Arthur Matthews. Then, with 12 Huron-Wendat guides, including a certain "Gros-Louis", head of the group, and a nurse, the group went deep into the woods, with all the equipment necessary for their experiments, until they reached the vast Sanford chalet.

In the hangar adjacent to the main building, Matthews, Sanford and Tesla are said to have set up a real makeshift laboratory, assembling a generator and building an electrical transformer. The goal was to transmit energy between this transformer, presumably some sort of tower, and three other buildings further down. The first, about fifteen kilometers further into the woods, the second near Desbiens, in Lac-Saint-Jean, and the third in Tadoussac.

In the following weeks, they fine-tuned many of the great inventions Tesla was working on at the end of his life, including achieving the unprecedented feat of transmitting electricity through the ground, wirelessly, between transformers. At least that's what Arthur Matthews claimed.

A story hard to believe, but all the historical details matched, Sylvain Gingras assured me. In the early 1930s, Henry Sanford did come to Sanford station in his own train car, almost always accompanied by a nurse due to his fragile health. The warden of the place, Harry Gros-Louis, then guided him to his estate, a large chalet bordered by a hangar.

The story was so precise, in fact, that Sylvain Gingras had adopted it in the reissue of his book on the history of the Triton. But he assured me he didn't even know of Matthews' existence in the 1980s when he wrote his first book. The initial information that Nikola Tesla had come to Club Triton therefore necessarily came from elsewhere, he said. But from where?

"It's annoying, but I don't remember? It was probably someone who told us about it. That was over 30 years ago and Tesla's name didn't mean much to us ... All we knew was that this eminent person had passed there. "

\* Below: Hélène Gros-Louis looks at her period photos.



**The mysterious tour of Lake Mackay-Smith**

"I remember when we went canoeing with my father on Mackay-Smith Lake, we saw some kind of antenna, a tower, but it was forbidden to go there. It was guarded. "

As I sat at my desk listening to the trembling voice on the other end of the phone, a shiver ran through my spine.

"Hold on, can you repeat that for me?" "

Chilled after having obtained as main proof of Nikola Tesla's experiences at Portneuf the testimony of a deceased man claiming to have traveled in space in a flying saucer, I had for a moment abandoned my inconclusive investigation.

But despite the implausibility of the story, I wasn't able to really get her out of my head. There was a rather intoxicating mystery there, I admit. In time lost, I had traced the descendants of the trapper and warden of Sanford station, Harry Gros-Louis, only to realize that his granddaughter, H  l  ne Gros-Louis, lived in Wendake, near Quebec.





The trapper and warden of Sanford station, Harry Gros-Louis.

PHOTO: COURTESY / HÉLÈNE GROS-LOUIS

I had been relieved to hear him speak to me face to face on the phone, recounting with precision memories of his youth. She was born in 1932 in a small house near the railroad tracks at Sanford station. Her father had taken over from her grandfather as caretaker of the place in the 1930s. She had known virtually nothing but the forest until the age of 15.

Nikola Tesla's name meant nothing to her, but the mention of Henry Sanford and Lake Mackay-Smith's name had just stirred memories in the 87-year-old. Without even mentioning the transformer supposedly built by Matthews and Tesla at the Sanford Estate, she was telling me about a tower under surveillance. A tower that even Sylvain Gingras, the historian of Triton, did not know existed.

"My god lord, that was so long ago! I was young. We traveled with my father to see the Americans at the different cabins and watch everything. But Mr. Sanford's cabin was the only place dad forbade us to go. It seemed to me that there was a guard at all times. There was something confidential there. "

In my head, I couldn't help but imagine the tower as a miniature version of the one Tesla had built at its laboratories in Colorado Springs and Long Island at the turn of the 20th century.





The Wardenclyffe station tower, Long Island, in 1904

PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS

But that was the end of Hélène Gros-Louis's story. If Nikola Tesla had come to conduct experiments at the Sanford Estate in 1932, it was the year of his birth and she couldn't remember it. She also couldn't remember hearing of an inventor.

Encouraged by her testimony, I still set out to contact as many people as possible who had lived or worked in the area in the mid-20th century.

But, most of the time I encountered obituaries, out-of-service phone numbers, or vague memories. Some had no idea what I was trying to tell them. Others referred me to Sylvain Gingras' book.

"I have often heard of it from Gérard Lirette. My father, who worked on the railroad, knew that too. It's true that Tesla came here. Even the Americans were talking about it at Club Triton, "Donald Grimard, a 77-year-old man who had been advised to me to contact when I started making calls in Lac-Édouard, the village finally told me. closer to the late Club Triton.

Gérard Lirette was also a goalkeeper at Club Triton. Teenagers, Donald Grimard and his friends followed him to lend a hand and have fun in the nearby forests. Of the group of friends in question, he was the only one still alive with his whole head, he told me. So I could only count on his testimony.

And when I found Gérard Lirette's son John, Nikola Tesla's name meant nothing to him. Neither does the story that a mysterious inventor experimented at Club Triton. He well remembered a mysterious tower guarded by guards, but not at Lake Mackay-Smith. Rather at Lake Elizabeth, about fifteen kilometers to the north.

This one, Sylvain Gingras knew of its existence. It had been built by another strange Club Triton figure, Maurice Heilmann, who had had a camp at Lake Elizabeth from 1910. He had the tower in question erected on top of a nearby mountain.

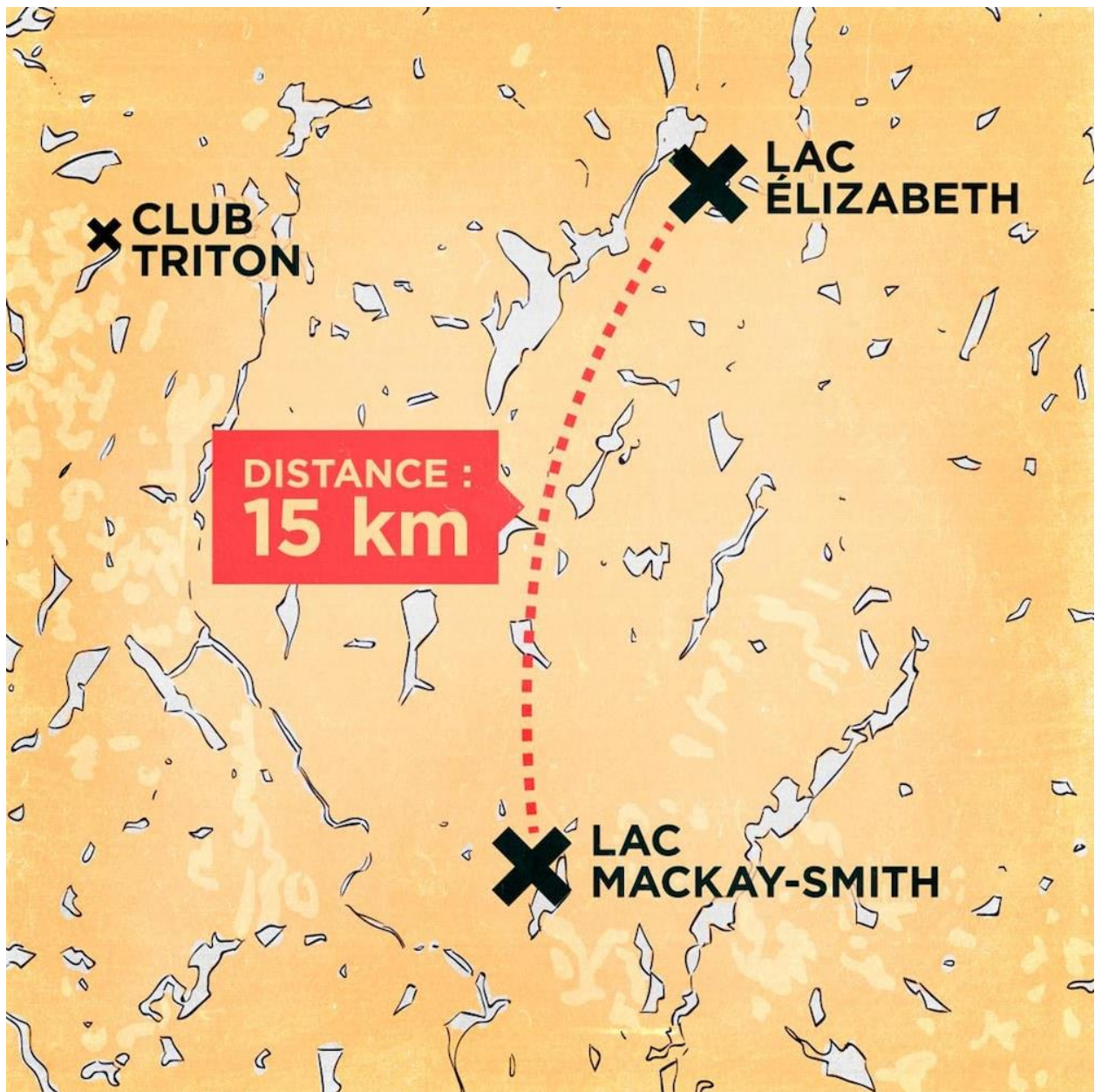
Little was known about Heilmann, other than that he had worked for the French government throughout the United States for several decades. Vice-consul in New York in the early 1900s, then in Philadelphia and Washington before becoming consul general in San Francisco from 1924 to 1931.

He had paid for his Club Triton membership until 1939, although he hadn't set foot there for years, according to Gingras. And it was later known that the tower was in fact a

telecommunications research center. The tower had been demolished a long time ago, but the anchors had been visible for some time before nature claimed its due.

Two mysterious towers, then, and a passage by Nikola Tesla that only Donald Grimard, who was not born at the time, seemed to have heard of. My investigation was progressing, but all of this was still insufficient.

Until I ran into another member of the Lirette family, Réjeanne.





Elizabeth Lake and Mackay-Smith Lake are located 15 km from each other.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA

\* Below: Stock image of Sanford station | Courtesy / H       Gros-Louis



### **The deserter**

The Lirettes, like the Gros-Louis, were trappers from father to son. G  rard Lirette had been the keeper of the main clubhouse of Club Triton, while his brother Ad  lard, R  jeanne's father, was stationed at Sanford station.

Adélard had taken over the custody of the Sanford station in Gros-Louis from 1951 until the closure of Club Triton in 1978.

Réjeanne Lirette had therefore, like Hélène Gros-Louis, spent most of her childhood surveying the forests around Sanford station with her father. And she did remember hearing about Nikola Tesla's visit to Lake Mackay-Smith... but there was a catch.

Your Mr. Tesla, did he call himself "the deserter"? - Réjeanne Lirette

Not to my knowledge. Nikola Tesla, after all, had immigrated voluntarily in 1884 to come and work in New York. But during World War II, many deserters had come to hide in the forests of Club Triton, I was told. So it was not impossible that ten years later, an old story about an inventor from the Balkans had been twisted enough to earn him the nickname "deserter."

"I was very curious when I was young. I remember my father talking to other men in his office about someone who had conducted experiments at Lake Mackay-Smith long before I was born. Dad always called him "the deserter", "Réjeanne Lirette, 72, told me.

She even remembered going there.





The Sanford Estate

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

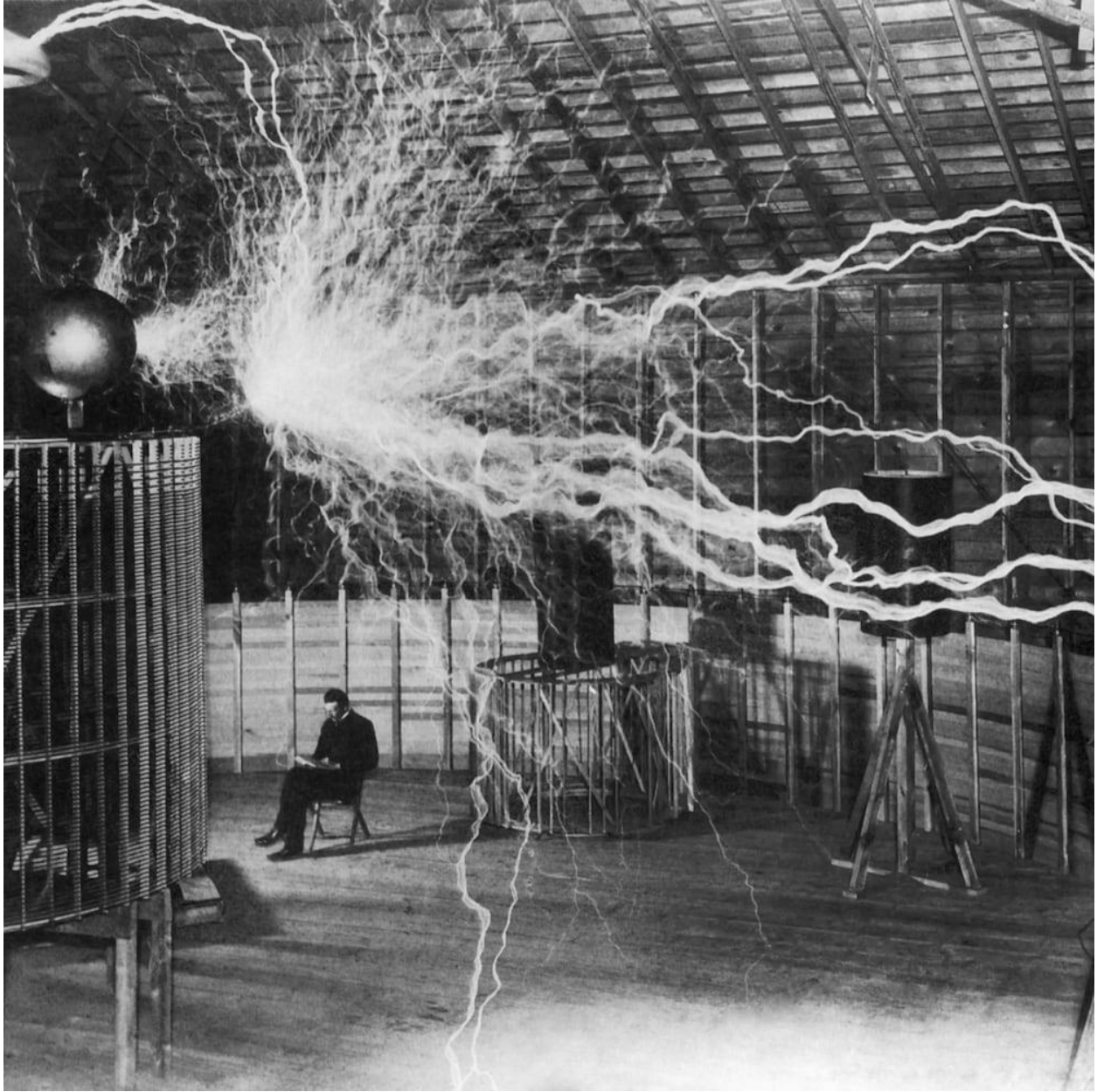
"We used to go to the Mackay-Smith once in a while. There was a shed behind and Dad was telling me to come check it out, that there was a gentleman who had stayed there and who knew Henry Sanford. Apparently this gentleman had made all kinds of inventions. He was still dragging things in the hangar and my father was showing me all of this. It was the gentleman in question who had done all these installations. But dad never mentioned his name and I don't think he knew him. "



Obviously, rumors of science experiments at Lake Mackay-Smith existed before Arthur Matthews recounted his supposed affair with Nikola Tesla.

Some archival work was in order, but I also needed to learn more about the last years of Tesla's life. By the early 1930s, after all, the eminent scientist was already in his 70s, and to all appearances he was never leaving New York.

\* Below: Nikola Tesla in his laboratory in December 1899. | John Parrot / Stocktrek Images / Getty Images



### **Who will get their hands on the safe?**

Nikola Tesla had died of coronary thrombosis. This was the conclusion of the doctor dispatched to room 3327 of the New Yorker Hotel to examine the scientist's body on January 8, 1943. The death was not considered suspicious.

The deceased remained active until he was 81, but his health began to deteriorate rapidly after he was struck by a taxi during his daily walk through New York in 1937.

What was he leaving behind in the room he had lived in for the past nine years? We were already jostling to find out.

The day after the death, before the news was communicated to the world, Sava Kosanovich, Tesla's nephew and Yugoslavian Ambassador to the United States, was at the New Yorker Hotel. Beside him, a friend of Tesla and a representative of the Museum of the Radio Corporation of America. All three were interested in the contents of the inventor's personal safe and anxious to know if a will had been left behind.

Representatives of the Yugoslav embassy and the New Yorker Hotel were also present, as was a locksmith in charge of opening the safe.

The latter had complied and the contents of the safe were quickly examined, but in the absence of a will it was quickly closed. Then the safe combination had been changed so that only Kosanovich had access. Tesla apparently hated his nephew, but the latter was the only descendant to come forward.

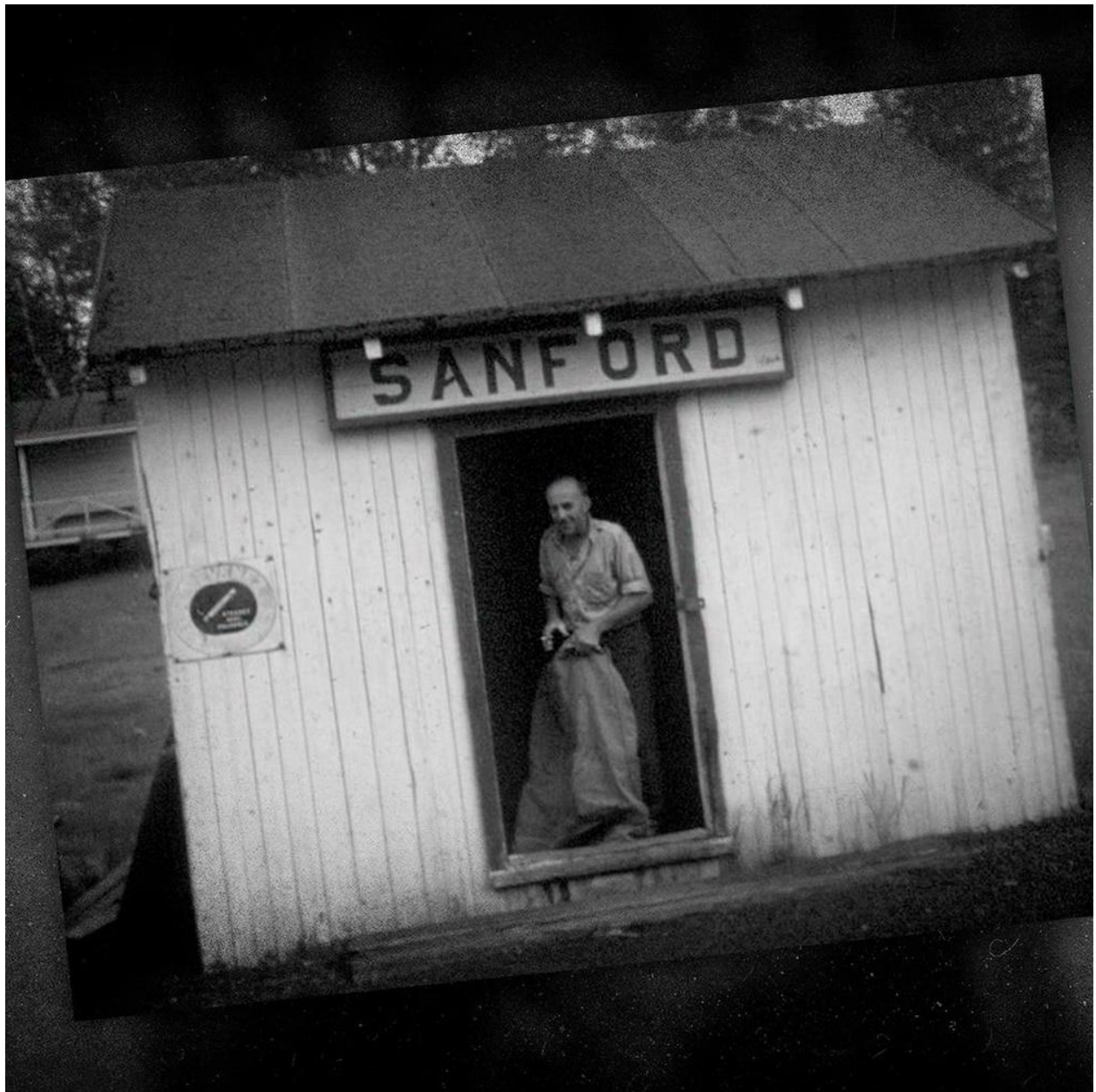
The story quickly caught on in the ears of the US secret service, however. In the midst of World War II, was there a risk that Nikola Tesla's secret inventions would end up in Yugoslav hands?

Already in 1940, J. Edgar Hoover, the omnipresent director of the FBI, had been suggested to provide security for Tesla at the New Yorker Hotel. It was only in July 1940 that the eccentric scientist declared that he had put the finishing touches to his death beam, supposedly capable of destroying entire nations, the teleforce. Tesla's credibility had eroded in recent decades, but the man was still behind great inventions of modern history. Better not to risk it.

That's why on January 9, 1943, two days after Nikola Tesla's death, two federal agents landed at the New Yorker to seize Tesla's safe and all of Tesla's personal belongings. Sava Kosanovich had been questioned to make sure he hadn't got hold of anything yet, then all the material had been sealed and transported to a federal warehouse in Manhattan for examination.

Even in death, Nikola Tesla remained true to himself: mysterious.

\* Below: Goalkeeper Adélar Lirrette at Sanford station. | Courtesy Sylvain Gingras



### **On the trail of the Sanford family**

"I don't know what you want to sell me, but I'm not interested. I would ask you to stop calling me, "an angry woman called on the other end of the phone to me in English before I had time to say a word.

The feminine voice with a slight Texas accent I heard on the phone was Susan Sanford Dudley and for weeks I had been trying to reach her at her Austin residence without ever having her pick up the phone.

She was wrong about my intentions, but after all how could she have guessed the reason for my call? A Quebec journalist was desperately trying to tell her about a chalet where she last set foot over 60 years ago.

It took me a while to piece together the family tree of Henry Sanford. His grandfather had been president of a train company, the Adams Express Company, leaving his descendants with a huge financial legacy. His father, Samuel Simons Sanford, was a distinguished conductor and dean of the Faculty of Music at Yale University whose best friend was the famous Polish pianist and composer Ignace Jan Paderewski.

Paderewski and Tesla had come together in the same circle of New York intellectuals at the turn of the 20th century. So there was, in theory, a possible connection between the Sanford family and Tesla.

Major Henry Sanford, for his part, had served in the United States Army in France during the First World War. According to the 1930 US Census, two years before his alleged escapade with Nikola Tesla at the Triton, Henry Sanford lived in Manhattan and, although he was makeshift self-employed, worked as an electrical engineer. Would his interest in the discipline have led him to want to work with the most famous electrical engineer in the city, Nikola Tesla?

An avid hunting enthusiast, Sanford first visited Club Triton in 1913, then acquired the Mackay-Smith Lake site to build his estate two years later.

"He was someone special in the history of Club Triton. He was a little incognito. He has already spent a full winter at his estate, which was very rare for Americans. He also had a fascination with firearms and was uncompromising with his employees. He took pleasure in putting them outside," Sylvain Gingras told me.

Henry Sanford employed about fifteen guides and workers in his field. Asthmatic, it was in a chair carried by guides that he made the route of a few kilometers between the railway and his camp on the shores of Lake Mackay-Smith.

He and his wife had two children. A girl, who died very young, and a boy, Henry Sanford Jr., who had kept the Sanford estate for several decades after his father's death in 1940.

Mr. Henry Sanford junior always arrived at Sanford station with a different woman, Réjeanne Lirette told me.

I had realized it myself by following the trail of his descendants. Henry Jr. had been married many times, several of his wives had died in dire circumstances, and it was difficult to trace his few children.

"My dear, how did you find my phone number? Susan Sanford asked me, a little flabbergasted, after I explained the reason for my call. Spending hours perusing obituaries, wedding announcements, and an American phone book, I told her.

Euphoric to finally join a member of the Sanford family, my joy eased a bit when I started talking about Nikola Tesla to my 72-year-old interlocutor.

The name meant absolutely nothing to him, nor did my story as an inventor accompanying his grandfather to the chalet on Lake Mackay-Smith.

"You must understand that my grandfather was already dead when I was born. But I went to the Mackay-Smith Lake camp with my mom and dad. I loved this place so much. These are my fondest childhood memories," Susan Sanford told me, trying to help me the best she could.

On the way to Club Triton, her father and grandfather spent all the time at Château Frontenac, she confirmed to me. Nikola Tesla would have stayed there at least one night. But I had already made inquiries with the Château Frontenac and the 1932 registers no longer existed.



No trace either at the Cercle de la Garnison de Québec, of which Henry Sanford was a member.

Susan Sanford had very few memories of her father, now deceased. She was close to him as a child, but she distanced herself after he remarried a woman she didn't get along with at all. She was pretty sure, however, that her family no longer had the register in which guests signed at the Sanford Estate.

\* Below: Arthur Matthews poses in front of a statue in honor of Nikola Tesla. | Courtesy / Lawrence Matthews



Arthur Matthews, great admirer of Tesla

In a 1973 book on the history of Lac-Beauport, author André Duval devotes several pages to what he calls "the original scholar" of the place, Arthur Matthews.

We learn that Matthews was known to the neighborhood for three things: his alleged encounters with extraterrestrials, the hundred inventions he had developed in his barn and submitted to the National Research Council of Canada and, finally, the letters. that he frequently sent letters to readers of the Quebec Chronicle Telegraph to extol the greatness of God, to talk about flying saucers or even to warn the population against cigarettes, "the devil's instrument", according to him.

Having exhausted most of my leads, I finally resigned myself to continuing my research on Arthur Matthews. Not that I thought I would find the key to my investigation of Venus, but it was worth clarifying the alleged relationship of the inventor of Lac-Beauport with Nikola Tesla.

Matthews claimed to have corresponded with Tesla for years. So I contacted one of her granddaughters, Linda Smith, to have a look at her grandfather's old papers.

Arthur Matthews's family history was also twisted and even his grandchildren struggled to navigate it, she told me. His great-grandfather Louis Leopold had presumably fled France before changing his name to Matthews in England.

Linda Smith seemed to have some doubts about Arthur's journey with Nikola Tesla, however. "I never discussed Tesla with my grandfather, but I obviously saw the 'Teslascope' assembled in his living room, in Lac-Beauport, with which he claimed to be able to read messages from Venus", told me. she wrote. Many Canadian and American ufologists had visited his grandfather during his lifetime, but the family never took these stories too seriously.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Matthews's archive, which his descendants still possessed, contained no letters from Nikola Tesla addressed to him, Ms. Smith confirmed to me after searching them. There was, however, a letter addressed to Nikola Tesla sent by Matthews on July 13, 1936 to the New Yorker Hotel.

A letter that had reached its destination since the curator of the museum dedicated to Nikola Tesla in Serbia had also sent it to me. The museum held most of the great inventor's property found at his death and I had asked if anything referring to Arthur Matthews was there. The curator found only one letter, the same as Linda Smith, which Tesla apparently kept without ever responding.

In this missive, however, dated more than three years after the supposed trip to Lake Mackay-Smith, Arthur Matthews presented himself to Nikola Tesla as a stranger admiring his work.

"Dear Sir, I take the liberty of writing to let you know that some people in this world know that your device for transmitting energy using only the earth, wirelessly, is working," Matthews began.

In reaction to a public outing made by Nikola Tesla two days earlier, in New York, Arthur Matthews explained to his idol that he himself was capable of such feats on his land in Lac-Beauport. In no case, however, did he mention common experiences that would have been made in the past.

Arthur Matthews was therefore, in all likelihood, only a great admirer of Nikola Tesla who tried to reproduce his work. He had been a real man of science, his grandchildren assured me. It wasn't until late in his life, around the time he began to claim he had contact with extraterrestrials, that the Lac-Beauport man publicly declared himself close to Tesla.

He who had lost his son Ray, a young army pilot, during the Second World War, Arthur Matthews seemed to have found by invoking God, Tesla and aliens a whole network of correspondents all over North America who, like him, did not prevent themselves from dreaming at the ends of our solar system.

I couldn't blame him.

But if he didn't know Tesla, where had he gotten such a precise account of his time at Club Triton?

Directly from Henry Sanford, my research suggested.

Arthur Matthews had worked most of his career for the Canadian Pacific Railway in Quebec. But clearly, his work had also led him to work on the railroad between Quebec and Lac-Saint-Jean. In a January 1935 article in Railway Electrical Engineer magazine, long before he wrote about his relationship with Tesla, Matthews recounted how he had assembled a radio-powered telephone "in a camp up in the woods. , north of Quebec".

\* Below: The Sanford Estate, nowadays





### **The secrets of the Sanford estate**

The sun at the end of August was at its zenith, in the middle of a cloudless sky, when I came out of the logging road bordering Lake Mackay-Smith at a run. In front of me, the Sanford estate seemed almost identical to the one in the period photos that I had seen in Sylvain Gingras' book, except that the wood had been painted green and a tractor was in the middle. ground.

I had contacted the owner of the premises, Aurèle Labbé, from the start of my process, but the chalet was difficult to access and the Labbé did not go there very often. I had to wait for him to give me a sign so I could come visit him.



It would be surprising if I discovered anything important, Mr. Labbé had warned me. The famous tower that Hélène Gros-Louis had described to me meant nothing to her. She hadn't been there a long time, obviously, when he bought the chalet in 1980.

Still, I felt feverish at the idea of finally setting foot in this place that had obsessed me since the beginning of my walk.

After the customary greetings, Aurèle Labbé and his wife led me first to the main building, where some furniture and an old stove had survived from the Sanford days.



Aurèle Labbé, the owner of Domaine Sanford

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

Scanning the large living room for old books or other period photos, I was quickly brought back to reality by the owner of the place. I wasn't the first to come for this reason, but the famous clues I was looking for were non-existent, he said.

Susan Sanford might have told me that her father had left everything behind, the estate had been abandoned for a few years before Aurèle Labbé bought it. It had been completely looted, the latter assured me. No forgotten records were sleeping there.

I tried my luck in the famous hangar, but it has been a long time since this vast room which had perhaps already been a playground for Tesla was nothing more than a shed cluttered with tools, a canoe and other property belonging to the Labbé.



The Sanford Estate shed is full of maintenance and outdoor equipment.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

In desperation, I set out to survey the land surrounding the estate, in vain, in search of the foundation for a tower that may have been erected there in another era.

All for little, I said to myself as I finished my tour. Yet I had been warned.

By the time I took a few pictures, I was already on a motorboat en route to the car waiting for me at the other end of the lake.

\* Below: Letter from FBI regarding investigation of Nikola Tesla documents. | Public domain



Mr. Walter Gorsuch,  
Alien Property Custodian,  
120 Broadway,  
New York, New York.

Dear Sir:

At your request and that of Mr. Joseph T. King of the Washington office of the Alien Property Custodian, I have examined the private papers, writings, and other property of the late Dr. Nikola Tesla with the view to determining both their possible usefulness to this country in its war effort and the possible hazard attendant on their falling into unfriendly hands.

This examination was made at the Manhattan Warehouse, 52nd Street, New York City, on January 26-27, and included all of the notes and material in Dr. Tesla's immediate possession at the time of his death and now in the custody of your office. For reasons indicated below, no investigation was made of material in trunks which had remained untouched in the basement of the New Yorker Hotel for ten years prior to Dr. Tesla's death.

As a result of this examination, it is my considered opinion that there exist among Dr. Tesla's papers and possessions no scientific notes, descriptions of hitherto unrevealed methods or devices, or actual apparatus which could be of significant value to this country or which would constitute a hazard in unfriendly hands. I can therefore see no technical or military reason why further custody of the property should be retained.

For your records, there has been removed to your office a file of various written material by Dr. Tesla which covers typically and fairly completely the ideas with which he was concerned during his later years. These documents are enumerated and briefly abstracted in the attachment to this letter.

## Epilogue

After seizing all of Nikola Tesla's property, when he died, it was to the famous engineer and physicist of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) John G. Trump that the American secret services had given the delicate mandate to look into the "Tesla Files" to determine if he was leaving behind any significant scientific invention.

Documents secretly analyzed by John G. Trump, whose nephew Donald would one day become President of the United States, have long fueled conspiracy theories. In 2016 and 2018,



however, several hundred pages of reports related to Tesla's death were declassified by the FBI under US Access to Information Law.

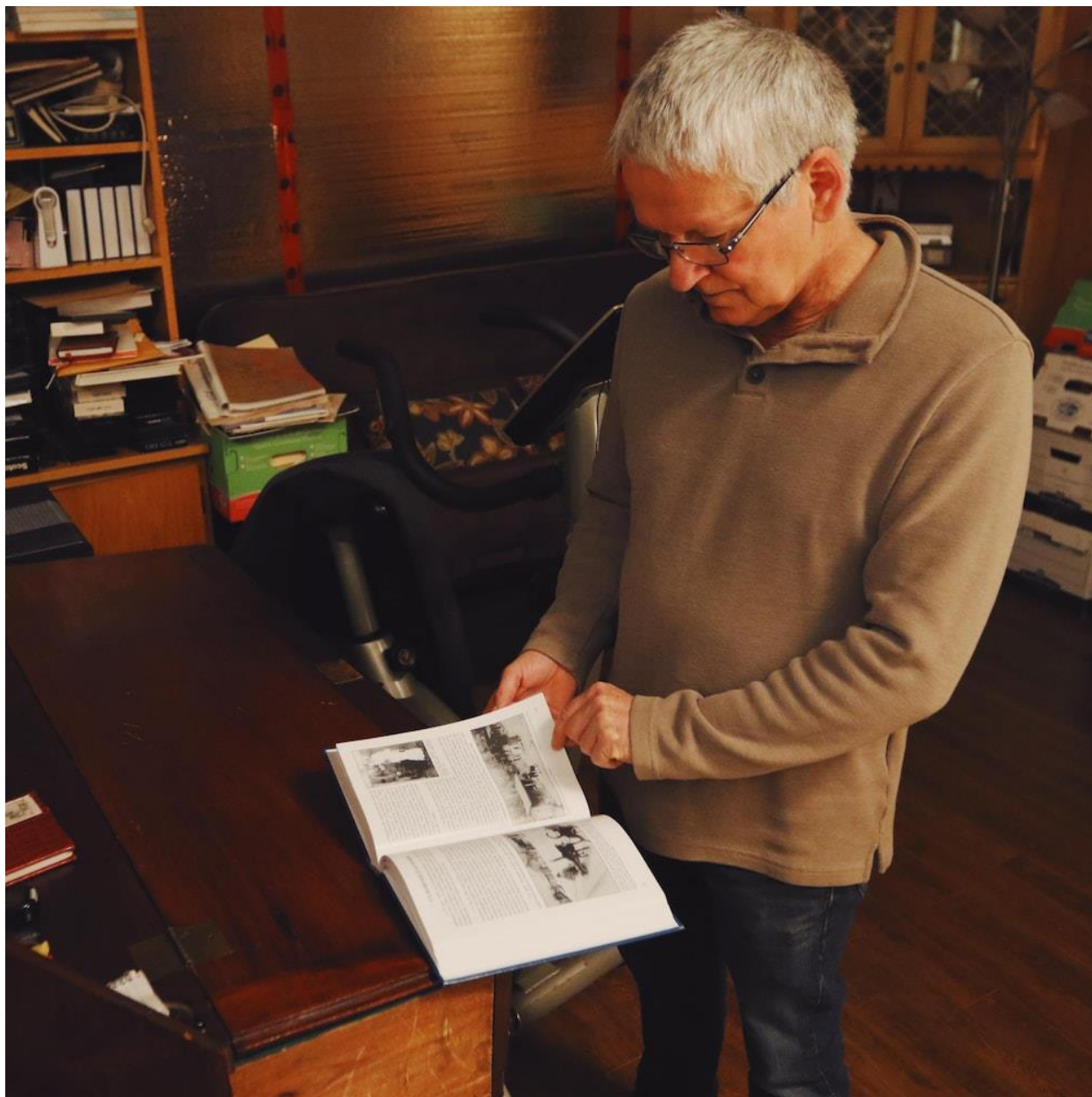
A fascinating read, in which one letter in particular stood out.

An unequivocal report by John G. Trump writes after analyzing "all notes and material in Nikola Tesla's direct possession at the time of his death."

There was "no scientific note" here that could be of value to the United States or cause problems if it ended up in enemy hands.

"This should in no way discredit the work of this distinguished engineer and scientist whose great contributions to electrical art were made at the turn of this century, but his thoughts and efforts for at least the past 15 years have been mainly of a nature. speculative, philosophical and, in a way, promotional - often about the production and wireless transmission of energy - without including new rational and applicable principles or methods to achieve such results ", concluded John G Trump.

If Nikola Tesla had carried out experiments in Quebec in the 1930s, they obviously did not yield any results.



Sylvain Gingras is leafing through a book on the history of the Triton club.

PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA / GUILLAUME PIEDBOEUF

As I stopped my car in front of Sylvain Gingras's house in Saint-Raymond, I still wondered what I was going to say to him.

We had talked to each other over and over again on the phone, never meeting in person. I was about to post my incomplete Tesla investigation and came to take a picture of it.

He greeted me in a small room cluttered with books which he was finishing turning into an office. Not very tall, with a lively gaze, a smile plastered on his lips when he spoke of Club Triton, he was as I imagined him to be.

I knew he couldn't wait to hear the tale of my visit to Lake Mackay-Smith, but he hadn't sounded disappointed when I confirmed to him that Nikola Tesla and Henry Sanford had left nothing behind.

"I'm pretty sure I flipped through all of the records that existed at Club Triton in the 1980s before writing my first book, and we hadn't seen Tesla's name. "

But he still mentioned the passage of the inventor. And precisely, he had something to show me. Rereading the very first edition of his book, which I had never had my hands on, Sylvain Gingras himself was surprised to find a short passage about Tesla.

He could not say who the story had come from, but he himself wrote at the time that it was to the tower of French diplomat Maurice Heilmann, in Lake Elizabeth, that Nikola Tesla had visited. several times to conduct experiments. Mysterious work that we never really knew if it was "a personal initiative or on behalf of a government".

I was both fascinated and frustrated that I hadn't heard this side of the story sooner. Especially since it brought more questions than answers. The testimonies I had gathered all pointed to the Sanford Estate.

I had devoted so much energy to Lake Mackay-Smith and my timid research on Maurice Heilmann had not yielded much. He had had two daughters, but we quickly lost track of his descendants.

For Sylvain Gingras, however, everything seemed to fit together. Arthur Matthews may not have been there, but his account of Tesla dovetailed. He said, after all, that the scientist's experiments were aimed at transmitting current between a tower at Lake Mackay-Smith and another about fifteen kilometers in the woods.

That of Maurice Heilmann at Lake Elizabeth.



Maurice Heilmann's chalet at Lake Elizabeth was abandoned after he left the club in 1939.

PHOTO: COURTESY SYLVAIN GINGRAS

Then we knew that Tesla, towards the end of his life, had offered his new technologies, no matter how bogus, to foreign governments. Maurice Heilmann had worked all his life for the French government.

Good luck, however, in proving all of these connections.

“When we researched the first book, we didn't really know who Nikola Tesla was. We hadn't really lingered on him, but Maurice Heilmann did, "Sylvain Gingras told me.

At the time, a Mrs. Grenon, who had been the childhood friend of Maurice Heilmann's daughters at Club Triton in the 1900s, claimed to hold a secret about the Lake Elizabeth Tower. She had come across something she shouldn't have seen there when she was young. But she had promised the Heilmann girls never to reveal what she had learned.

“We tried everything to get her to tell us, but she never did. She died with her secret, "he told me.

“Between Nikola Tesla, Henry Sanford and Maurice Heilmann, you came across the most mysterious characters of the Triton. You are really not lucky, "he laughed to me as he said goodbye.

As I left Saint-Raymond for Quebec that evening, I looked back at history and asked if I should relaunch my investigation. To push my research on Maurice Heilmann further?

After all, I was still unable to confirm or deny the legend that Nikola Tesla had conducted some of the last experiments of his life in Quebec.

Yet I felt like I had reached the end of my personal quest.

" It's exactly that. The story that was told at the time was that Nikola Tesla had done experiments in a Triton tower about electricity, "Donald Grimard happily replied when I called him back for the last time. tell him the publication of my story. He was, after all, one of my few sources who believed in Tesla's switch to the Triton. Now that I told him my discoveries, he remembered the tours of Elizabeth and Mackay-Smith lakes. But these memories did not come from him.



"I'm sure this is all true. I'm only telling you what I've been told, but my father, who grew up in Lac-Édouard in the early 20th century, spoke about it much more positively. "

Word of mouth for the past 85 years, the story of the mysterious passage of an inventor at Club Triton had traveled from the depths of the Quebec forest to all over the planet.

It was a little poetic, I reassured myself, that my investigation into the arrival of Nikola Tesla in this vast ancestral Huron-Wendat territory came up against the limits and the beauty of oral tradition.

It demands to take our word for it.

During my investigation, I had spoken to all kinds of people who, like me, had looked at history. Local residents, scientists, historians, curious citizens, ufologists ...



Nikola Tesla seated in front of one of the coils used during his experiments on wireless current in his laboratory in East Houston St.

PHOTO: TESLA UNIVERSE

In the absence of definitive proof, those who wanted to believe it always found a plausible version of the story, no matter how much conflicting evidence I brought them.

Others saw it as a simple hoax, no matter what coincidences and strange tales I had amassed.

Who was right? Who was wrong?

"Instinct is something that transcends knowledge," Nikola Tesla once said. "We definitely have certain fine fibers that allow us to perceive the truth when logical deduction, or any other deliberate effort of the brain, turns out to be futile. "

Did Nikola Tesla conduct experiments in secret deep in the Quebec forest?

When the line between myth and reality is so blurry, perhaps the truth depends on the point of view.

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